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CONTEMPORARY ECHOES

REMEMBER RUSSIA

FROM A SPEECH BY MELVILLE E. STONE, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WHEN we consider that the number of newspapers in Russia is limited to fifteen hundred or two thousand, all under a rigid censorship, all forbidden to express any views, we naturally inquire, "How is it possible for such a country, occupied by nearly two hundred millions of people, of whom only ten per cent, read or write any language, to achieve and maintain self-government?"

That is a perfectly natural inquiry; but it makes no account of another side of the picture. Russia, whether all I have said is true or not, has another side. For one hundred and fifty years, in many of her activities, she has been one of the self-governing countries of the world. The little farmer who, in Russia, can neither read nor write, meets once a year with the other farmers in his vicinity or in his village (it is called a "Mir") for defensive purposes. The villages in Russia are built as many of the villages in the old days were. The village there is built in the center, and the farms radiate therefrom. They meet in this manner, and have so met for more than one hundred and fifty years, once a year, to transact their own little local business.

If you will read John Fiske's book on *The American Political Ideals and their Origin*, you will find that the author traces our New England town meeting back to the Russian "Mir." It was there that it had its origin. It was born in the days of Catherine II. Of course, at that time the serfs were not free, and the landlords were the masters and they met in these village meetings. Then, in 1861, when the serfs were freed and attached to the land, they became participants in these meetings. Now a great many of these people cannot read or write, but they are taught by practice a form of self-government.

There are some rather interesting and amusing incidents in connection with these annual meetings of the Russians. For instance, every year they re-allot the farms, and, curiously enough, the man who grumbles is the man who gets the best farm, because he will have to pay more taxes and work harder, and he would rather have a poor farm and work less and pay less taxes.

They have a second form of self-government—they hold their municipal elections in the cities. They have had municipal elections for years. They also have a third form, which is analogous to the county councils of England, covering a larger field. These are the Zemstvoes, and they are self-governing. And, finally, they have a fourth form—the Duma, which was given them in 1905 by the Emperor Nicholas. The people have been trained through all these activities in self-government.

You have read, of course, of bomb-throwing in Russia, the work of the Nihilists and of the revolutionaries. But underlying all these things, Russia in the main has been a quiet and orderly country. Two things in her history that stand out as wonderfully significant are, first, that when Alexander freed the serfs (which was a thing of great moment, involving, as it did, the fortunes of a great many men), it was done quietly and calmly; the landlords of Russia participated in it, approved it, and there was no excitement and no disturbance.

Then since this war you have had an illustration of the calm character of the Russian people. By a stroke of the pen, vodka disappeared entirely from every table in Russia. I said to a friend of mine, a colonel of a Siberian regiment, who was over here recently, "Was there no dissent?" "No," he replied. "Did it depend entirely upon the supreme authority of the autocrat of the Russias?" I asked. "No," he said. "We all recognized that vodka drinking was a curse. In my own case, my brother and I had two vodka factories, and when this order came we said, 'Well, it means bankruptcy, but it is right, and we are going to do it; we are not going to dissent from the order of His Majesty.' We converted our factories into munition factories; we put our people at work in them, and we have been saved by them. Of course, we are not making nearly the amount of money we did before."

I do not know whether you read the stories The Associated Press had recently on the liberation of the Siberian exiles. These despatches were of a very remarkable character. One that impressed me very greatly was written by Mr. Robert Crozier Long, whom I sent from Stockholm to Petrograd, and out into Asia, to meet the incoming exiles from the mines. You may be interested in my calling renewed attention to them, as giving some illustration of the Russian character.

Out near some point—Irkutsk or Omsk—there was a Governor of a prison who heard of the revolution. The prisoners didn't hear of it, but the Governor knew it was coming. "Well," he said, "I am going to flog them once today, anyhow, so they will enjoy freedom when they get it." So he called them in and flogged them, and then disappeared. The parish priest told them of the revolution and informed them they were all free, and they went down to get this man, who had indulged in the flogging process in the morning. And they found him, and, of course, they were greatly incensed and they wanted to kill him. One of them said, "No—No, we will not do it. We will not stain this revolution by murder!" And they didn't.

Now I have very great hope for the future of Russia. I first visited Russia something like twenty-five or twenty-seven years ago. I have been there frequently since. The Russian people are a kindly people. There was never any reason in the world for the racial quarrel that existed there, except that it was stimulated by the bureaucracy. The Kishinev massacre, the Lodz massacre and the others were all stimulated by a number of

Chauvinists, who were acting in conjunction with the St. Petersburg bureaucracy.

That went on and on and on until it finally reached a point where no member of the bureaucracy felt that he was safe; that these attacks which were made by the Third Section of the Czar's police were likely to reach him. A man would sit in his apartment or in his home in St. Petersburg. There would come a rap on the door. A polite young man in citizen's clothing would be introduced. He would say to this home-staying body, "They would like to see you down at Police Headquarters. There is a carriage downstairs; will you come down?" He would put on his hat and coat and go down. He was taken to Police Headquarters, and then, without trial, without any knowledge as to his offense, he found himself sent to one of the dungeons in the prison of St. Peter and St. Paul on an island in the Neva.

Well, the next day his family, not knowing, but suspecting that something was wrong, took steps to inquire. The man's brother went to the prison and asked the keeper if Ivan is there. The keeper said, "Well, who are you that you should inquire?" "I am his brother." "Oh, you are." "Yes." "And you want to see your brother?" "Yes." "Well, the next cell to his is vacant, and you shall have it."

And so he was incarcerated. And those two men were sent to Siberia, and unless by some fortuitous circumstance they could get word out, their families, who had not the faintest idea of their whereabouts, might never know what their fate had been. That condition had gone on. Bureaucratic, tyrannous government had become intolerable for everyone. It had its terrors for even the bureaucrats themselves. The *lettres de cachet* of Mirabeau's day were harmless compared with the diabolism practiced by the Third Section of the Czar's police.

If a man of the bureaucracy for any reason felt he would like to see another member of the bureaucracy put out of the way—and sometimes for reasons that are amazing—he might take the husband of a woman who is wanted. If he wanted a fellow bureaucrat put out of the way, he would make some charge against this bureaucrat, and if he could get the ear of the Third Section, this bureaucrat himself would go to Siberia.

Now they reached a point where the bureaucracy of Russia overturned almost all of the decisions of the "Mir" and of the municipal elections, and of the Zemstvoes, and closed the Duma and reached down with such terrible tyranny upon them that they finally, all of them, even bureaucrats, were glad to have the revolution.

I don't think the Emperor was as responsible for these conditions as perhaps would appear on the surface. I remember a very interesting talk I had with him, in which he said, "If they let me live, I will give Russia a government modeled after the British Government. My mother was an Englishwoman; my tutor was an English clergyman. Don't make any mistake; I know what a limited monarchy is. And English is the language of our home." (It is the Court language at the Winter Palace and Tsarskoe-Selo.) He said, "I do not know whether they will let me live or not. My grandfather undertook to give them a constitution, but on the very day he had given it to them he was assassinated."

Now that brings me to a point of view in respect to Russia that I think is a just one. I know that Dr. Andrew D. White has said he thought Nicholas was savage in his instinct—a view growing out of a statement

Nicholas made in his presence when Dr. White was our Ambassador to Russia. I do not agree with him. He is a coward, and small wonder that he is a coward. He has lived in the atmosphere of poison and of bombs, and he has exemplified the theory that, "all cowards are brutes." It is inherent in him; it is a part of his nature. That was expressed by Plehve, the Minister of the Interior. I was talking to him about the censorship, and he said, "Oh, no, I don't think it can be done." "Well," I said, "I am sorry I don't agree with you. I don't think these repressive measures will work out in the end. Of course, all government is repressive, in a measure, but over-repression ends in revolution." "Well," he said, "if you drop the lines the horses are going to run away."

Now that is the attitude, and has been the attitude of the country so far. "If you drop the lines the horses would run away." All you had to do to induce the Emperor to send a man to Siberia was to say, "Well, your children are in danger." "This man is a revolutionist." "This man will poison your food." "This man will throw a bomb and kill you."

While I think Nicholas honestly wished to give them a better government, he countenanced tyranny and barbarism out of his fears, until it became absolutely unendurable.

The Chairman has called attention to something I said at the National Arts Club about our relation with the Russians. If you will read the authenticated history of your own country, you will learn that, from the very foundation of the Republic to this hour, Russia has been our steadfast friend. Not a friend in lavish professions—to whisper a tale of devotion to our ear in the moment of our triumph only to break faith with us in the moment of our trial—but a friend who has ever held out a helping hand in every time of need. If you care to learn the story, you will find it in the diary of John Quincy Adams, in Thiers' *History of the Consulate and Empire* of Bonaparte; in the letters and reports of Bayard Taylor and Cassius M. Clay, and every minister and every ambassador and every *chargé* of this country at St. Petersburg. It was not the unbroken squares of Wellington under the shadow of Mont St. Jean that sealed Napoleon's doom, it was the friendship of Alexander, the Czar of Russia, for the Americans, four years earlier. There was an hour when an American President—Madison—had but one minister at any court of Europe, and that minister was at St. Petersburg. And that minister was John Quincy Adams, "the old man eloquent." Russia and France were in close alliance as the result of the famous treaty on the raft at Tilsit. The Berlin and Milan decrees had been issued forbidding commerce with Britain by any of the continental Powers which were under Napoleon's thumb. By direction of the French Emperor, American ships were classed with British ships, because we had refused to obey his command that we make war on Great Britain. Adams was sent as minister to Russia. On his way, pursuant to Bonaparte's decree, he found fifty American merchantmen held, by order of the French Emperor, for trial by a Danish prize court at Copenhagen. He stopped and protested, but in vain. He pushed on to St. Petersburg; he begged Russia to inter-vene. Russia was committed by her alliance with France to the Berlin and Milan decrees. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs declined the demand of Adams. Then Adams went to Alexander, the Russian Emperor, and the Czar struck the blow which toppled the mighty Corsican from his throne and finally sent him to St. Helena. Overruling his minister, he not only compelled the release of the impounded American ships at Copenhagen, but,

defying his French allies, he opened all of the Russian ports to American commerce. And later, through his influence, he induced Sweden, under John Bernadotte, to join in defying the Milan decrees and to allow American vessels to enter the ports of Sweden; and because of this—because of this act—the alliance between France and Russia was broken, and Russia and Sweden joined with England in marching on to Waterloo and to Paris. Criticizing his Imperial Master on that occasion, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs said to Mr. Adams, "Our friendship for America is obstinate, more obstinate than you know." It was so obstinate, that for it Alexander broke with Napoleon and remade the map of Europe.

But two years after Waterloo, and while Russia was fresh in her alliance with Britain, she gave us another signal evidence of her friendship for the United States. We quarreled with England over the construction of the treaty of Ghent, and the matter was submitted to Alexander, the same Russian Emperor as arbiter, and he decided in our favor. But still later, when we were in the throes of the Civil War, another Alexander, another Czar of the Russians, sent two fleets, not one, to New York and San Francisco, to testify that there was one civilized Power of Europe who was our friend.

I know that doubt has been cast upon the statement that these fleets were under sealed orders to report to President Lincoln in case England and France undertook to intervene, and although there is much evidence that such was the fact (indeed, Minister Lothrop, who was our minister there, left testimony that he himself had seen the sealed orders)—although there is much evidence to sustain that statement, I do not care to assert it. What is of still greater importance and significance, and what cannot be challenged, is a letter from Bayard Taylor to Secretary Seward, written in the hour of our sorest peril and detailing an audience with Gortschakoff, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs: "Russia alone has stood by you from the first, and will continue to stand by you," said Prince Gortschakoff to Mr. Taylor. "Proposals will be made to Russia to join in some plan of interference. She will refuse any invitation of the kind. Russia will occupy the same ground as at the beginning of the struggle. You may rely upon it. She will not change." Turn to the diplomatic papers of the Government for 1862 and read that letter, and imagine what it meant to the agonized soul of Lincoln. I am sure it is not too much to say that but for Russia's firm attitude of friendship there would have been an intervention and probably the resultant disruption of this Union.

Such, gentlemen, is our obligation to Russia.

We are engaged in a great world struggle for democracy. You have had the most wonderful illustration in Russia of a people rising in its might. As I said the other night, I firmly believe that if all the blood that has been spilled and all the wealth that has been spent in this war results only in a free Russia, it will have been well worth all it has cost humanity.

FAIR PLAY FOR ALL

From the Chicago Journal.

Secretary Daniels has rejected the prices demanded by producers of steel, oil and coal, and ordered these products delivered to the navy at prices to be determined later by a Government investigating board. The steel men have agreed to a price which the Secretary deemed fair, and no inves-

tigation on that score is necessary. The coal and oil men are complying with the order while the investigators work. There is every reason to believe that the government will save many millions of dollars by this act, and still leave a fair profit for the producers.

In view of this, and a number of similar occurrences, isn't it about time for anti-Administration organs to quit their endeavor to make Mr. Daniels the "goat"?

George Harvey started this work in the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, but in the last number of that Review, Harvey puts the reverse English on his criticisms, and concedes that Daniels put the destroyer fleet in European waters "as if it had been dropped from the sky."

Doubtless Mr. Daniels has made mistakes. In particular, he made the mistake of underestimating the importance and menace to America of the European conflict; thereby ranking himself with about nine-tenths of his countrymen. But since the struggle came home to us, someone seems to be handling our navy in first-class fashion; and if anti-Administrationists will not give Daniels credit for positive action, they must admit that at least he has the ability to get and follow good advice.

Give Secretary Daniels fair play and full support. If he fails to make good under those conditions, off with his head—but do not begin discussing his successor or wiring for the headsman until he has failed.

THE NEED OF CO-OPERATION

From the Indianapolis Star.

The suggestion that the President form a war council for the purpose of relieving him of a measure of his tremendous burden has been frequently made since war was declared. Ever since Mr. Wilson became President it has been made plain that it is his inclination to take upon himself the performance of many duties which could be and are ordinarily delegated to assistants. He is a man who, all his life, has been accustomed to depend on himself and he has an unusual capacity for detail work. One illustration of his habit and method is his writing out of his own speeches and public documents on the type machine, contrary to the almost universal custom among public officers and business men of dictating such papers.

In discussing the subject Col. George Harvey urges that the five best minds of the country be selected—the choice to be made from any walk in life, the only requirement being that they should be the biggest, the broadest and intellectually the strongest in the land. They should be men in whom the President and the people would have confidence and to them the President could delegate such duties as he might see fit. This board should have the one purpose of helping the country and the people to win the war. This is a practical suggestion and worth considering, the only difficulty that presents itself being the President's indisposition to gather big men around him.

It is probable that authority for the formation of such a board would have to be given by Congress, and it is intimated that certain Southern Congressmen who are dissatisfied with some of the war measures and especially with some provisions of the conscription law are preparing to urge the creation of a committee on the conduct of the war which shall stand

as a sort of guardian over Mr. Wilson. This would be an absurdity, since no such body could deprive him of any of his constitutional rights, and would simply operate to give aid and encouragement to the enemy. It stands Congress in hand to work in co-operation with the President to win the war. That one duty is what the country now expects it to perform.

OPINION OF A PESSIMIST

From the Boston Evening Transcript.

What the President needs most urgently at the moment, remarks Colonel George Harvey in the current *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, is "a combined sieve and buffer." He is convinced that a Solomon and a Samson coalesced would collapse under the tremendous burden which now rests upon the mind and body of the President. Colonel Harvey believes that the overpowering and most pressing need of the hour is concentration of direction of the manifold divergent forces which must be exercised to their utmost if we are to win the war. "Physically, although of toughest fibre, the President is not a superman. . . . A War Council there must be, to co-ordinate, to perceive, to suggest, to study, to safeguard the life, the health, the perspective and the vision of the leader of the nation." This War Council, Colonel Harvey believes, "should comprise the five best minds in the country. Its members should be drawn from our entire aggregation of brains—from the Supreme Court, from the Congress, from the Cabinet, from the law, from finance, from business, from labor, from any of the professions, from any walk in life." Certainly a sublime optimist is Colonel George Harvey if he expects it to be done.

FOR A WAR COUNCIL

From the Hartford Courant.

Colonel Harvey's suggestion of a war council which should comprise the five best minds to be found in the country, men commanding the confidence of President and of people, for the purpose of helping the President, is a good one. Every power now in conflict has been compelled to this recourse. Such a council would be worth incalculably more than the whole bunch of the Cabinet, and could be depended upon for both military and economic necessities.

From the Tacoma News.

Not even a combination of Samson and Solomon could stand the burden which the people of the United States are seeking to lay upon their President's shoulders, according to Col. Harvey of the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, whose solicitude for the presidential shoulders is more generous than last fall when the colonel's ambition was to load upon them a consummate defeat. Patriotism, however, makes a whole nation kin and the colonel has forgotten the peccancies of the man he made, to discuss the need of a war council of five of the greatest minds in the United States, to which the load of war may be transferred by the President.